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UNITARIAN SETTLEMENTS

IN

NORTH CAROLINA AND FLORIDA

PREPARED BY THE

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UNITARIAN SETTLEMENTS IN NORTH CAROLINA AND FLORIDA

Every Unitarian, every student of rural conditions, every one interested in social service, and in the development of higher standards of citizenship in all parts of this country, ought to be acquainted with the work done in North Carolina by The Alliance and the American Unitarian Association in the last fifteen years, and to be thoroughly proud of the loyalty and devotion which have made such work possible. Every church and every Alliance branch ought to feel that it is a privilege to have a share in promoting this undertaking, and to be ready to co-operate by every means in their power. It appeals to all through its religious, educational, and social activities, and through the fact that the influence of such work is not *local*, but *national*. Any one who has been privileged to visit this settlement has gone away with deep appreciation of what has been accomplished under great difficulties; and also with a keen sense of the duty devolving upon all our churches to maintain this work, because of the far-reaching results to be won through improved health, greater economic progress, and higher standards of citizenship.

The question is often asked: Where is this work, and what is it? The communities are found in southeastern North Carolina, as will be seen by the map. If you are going to Shelter Neck, the train on the Atlantic Coast Line will leave you at a little town called Watha, about thirty miles north of Wilmington, and then there is a seven miles' drive through pine woods to the hamlet. For Shelter Neck is not a village, nor has it the distinction of a post office.

The houses that we pass are plain one-, two-, and three-room homes, but at length our guide points out a very attractive modern school-building with a flag-pole in front, from which fly the flags of North Carolina and the Union. A minute's walk from the school on the same side of the road is the church, a neat, cheerful-looking building; and between the two, past the Fifield Me-

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SCHOOL AND WELL AT SHELTER NECK

DIX HOUSE. CHURCH AT RIGHT

Church KIMBALL HOUSE, SHELTER NECK *Dix House*

SWANSBORO

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morial Well lately given in memory of Mrs. Emily A. Fifield, the road leads to Dix House, a large well-painted, hospitable looking home, the headquarters for all the activities of the settlement. Nearby is Kimball House, a dormitory for teachers and girl boarders. Here, too, some of the weaving and rug-making industries are carried on. Between the houses is the farm in a most excellent state of cultivation. This is the plant at Shelter Neck.

Swansboro is only sixty miles from Shelter Neck, across country, but it is on another railroad line, and fifteen hours of travel are necessary to reach it by rail. Maysville, a town about one hour's ride from Newbern, is the rail-

SALEM COTTAGE, SWANSBORO

road station; then there is an eighteen-mile drive through the woods, fording many brooks and rivers, and, at the end of a little peninsula, we find the town on Bogue Sound. As it is on the seashore, fishing is the principal industry, but it has also a large saw-mill and sends away a great deal of lumber.

Here we find a very attractive bungalow, Salem Cottage, the home of the minister and his wife, and the teachers; and close by, an excellent school-building, very well equipped for the work. The church is a short distance

from the bungalow on another street. It is similar to the Shelter Neck church and very pleasing both inside and out.

The work at Shelter Neck, Swansboro, and other stations may be divided into three classes: (1) Religious; (2) educational; (3) social service.

RELIGIOUS WORK.

The religious work in North Carolina is in charge of three ministers, Rev. W. S. Key, Rev. John L. Robinson, and Rev. W. E. Cowan. Mr. Key has charge of the churches at Shelter Neck and Pink Hill, a town fifty-five miles away as the crow flies, but a long day's journey by rail and other conveyances. At each place he preaches once a month. There is a flourishing Sunday School at Shelter Neck, which meets every week.

Mr. Robinson has services at Swansboro twice a month, and from there he goes once a month to the White Oak church, where a pleasant congregation in a charming little building among the pines awaits him. To get there,

CHURCH AT SHELTER NECK

he takes a trip of four miles in a motor boat, and then a short drive. On one Sunday, he goes to the church at Bear Creek, a five-mile trip in a motor boat, and then a three-mile drive. Here, as elsewhere, there is a very good church building. In accordance with local customs, our services are arranged to be held once or twice a month, that they may not conflict with other denominations.

Mr. Cowan has his headquarters at Watha, and goes out to preach in all the surrounding country, using brush shelters, school buildings, houses, and often speaking in the open.

In addition to this work in North Carolina, Rev. Francis McHale is doing fine circuit work in northern Florida. He has regular appointments at Bristol, Rock Bluffs, and Marianna, and a new church is being built at Mount Pleasant. He has also calls to preach in many other directions, to all of which he responds as far as possible; and he makes great use of the newspaper press to spread our liberal gospel.

It is the aim of all these preachers to give to the people a religion of love instead of a religion of fear. They try to make religion mean not a creed, but a life; not joining the church merely, but doing justly, and loving mercy, and caring for one's neighbor, thus honoring God and man. It is not outside of the daily life, but is to be realized in the home, on the farm, in the conduct of business, in all social relations. It means helpfulness in time of need, goodwill, friendliness.

When a certain revival preacher undertook to attack Mr. Key, a man rose in the meeting, and exclaimed, "You need not attack Mr. Key in this place. He's the only minister in these parts who has stood by us in all our troubles. When the flood came and ruined us, what did you do? Nothing. What did Brother Key do? Everything. He looked out for our families, gave us shelter, saved us from starvation, gave us money to get on our feet again. You can't say anything against Brother Key here." And he walked out of the meeting, followed by a number of others.

Both Mr. Key and Mrs. Peterson have frequently been guests in the home of a Baptist lady in one of the near-by towns. One day she was reproached by a neighbor for showing hospitality to heretics. "Heretics," she exclaimed, "they're the only real Christians I know!"

When about ten years ago, Mrs. Emily A. Fifield and Miss Fanny Field went to represent The Alliance at the dedication of the White Oak church, they found it almost impossible to secure a night's lodging in Swansboro because they were Unitarians. Two years ago Miss French, a teacher at the school, died suddenly, and the people of the town vied with each other in doing everything possible for her and her friends. On the day of her funeral work was suspended, and the entire town turned out to do her honor. The ministers of the Baptist and Methodist churches took part in the service, and testified to their appreciation of what her work had meant to the community. Such incidents show us the value of our religious work. We may not be able to build large, self-supporting churches we are building *lives*.

These illustrations show us that here is a great field in which to preach Unitarian Christianity, and to bring to people a religion of hope and cheer, of courage and faith. Everywhere there are many ready and glad to listen to the message, and delighted to know that they are not atheists because they cannot accept the old creeds. Our preachers have little or no difficulty in securing audiences, and the people come from miles around in mule or ox teams, or afoot, to hear the message. Have we not here a great duty as well as opportunity?

This religious work is carried on amid many difficulties and hardships. There are long journeys in all sorts of conveyances, sometimes a freight or platform car being the only means of reaching the destination; but none of the workers ever spare themselves. The expense of the work is borne by the American Unitarian Association and The Alliance.

EDUCATIONAL WORK.

This is carried on at Shelter Neck and Swansboro only, and is in charge of the Carolina Industrial School Corporation. A few interested Unitarians had at first the entire management, but later, it seemed better to form a corporation to hold the school property, to engage teachers, and to care for the farm.

At Shelter Neck there was no school nearer than three miles, and it kept only two months of the year. In 1902 the late Miss Ellen Crehore of Can-

SCHOOL AND CHILDREN, SWANSBORO

SCHOOL TEAMS, SHELTER NECK

ton, Mass., went to Shelter Neck for three months, gathered the children around her in Dix House, and did what she could for them. One of her boys went to Camp Hill, and, upon graduation, was placed in charge of the school farm there, and is now employed by the state of North Carolina as an agricultural expert.

From Miss Crehore's small beginnings, an excellent school has been developed, covering primary and grammar school branches, and some high school work. In addition, quite a little manual training is undertaken, basket-making, rugs, weaving, sewing, and some domestic work for the girls, and farm work for the boys.

In 1905 a school was opened at Swansboro, the public school accommodations being insufficient for half the children of school age. Miss Lucy O. Fessenden, assisted later by Miss Frost, taught the pupils for the first year. Here, in addition to the regular branches, a good class in carpentry has been maintained for three years.

The schools average between fifty and sixty pupils, and that the children appreciate the opportunity given them is shown by the obstacles they overcome in order to be present. The accompanying picture shows some of their means of conveyance. The boy with the goat team drives two and one-half miles each way; the children with the ox cart, three miles each way; and those with the mule team travel five miles each way, while other children walk several miles. Probably all of them do quite a little work at home morning and night. How many of our Northern children and parents would make such sacrifices for an education, especially when the school laws are not so strict as in New England?

These children are for the most part descendants of old English and Scotch families, and bear names that are known in history. One little fellow had for ancestor a poet laureate of England. As a rule, they are bright and interesting, extremely responsive to all that is done for them.

The farm is a very important part of the work of the Carolina Industrial School Corporation. It is well described by Rev. H. W. Foote, who says:

"Shelter Neck is primarily an agricultural community, and the influence of the school farm is very noticeable. While the farm acreage is small and its equipment meagre compared to some of the larger model farms, the prod-

uce represents a far higher level of agricultural skill than prevails in the neighborhood. For example, every year some twenty to thirty varieties of vegetables and fruits are raised upon the school farm, most of which were previously unknown to the community which until recently raised little besides sweet potatoes, collards, onions, cow peas, beans, and corn. The school farm, however, besides introducing improved varieties of most of these vegetables, raises Irish potatoes, carrots, cauliflower, cabbage, radishes, celery, strawberries, and other fruits. In addition, Mr. Key keeps a few good pigs of a grade much superior to the hogs which frequent the North Carolina woods. The farm thus not only offers a stimulating example, but provides a large part of the table for the school. Considerable expense has to be incurred in developing the farm, improving the soil by cultivation and fertilization, the providing of the necessary up-to-date farm implements, the purchase and maintenance of horses, cows, pigs, hiring of labor, etc., all of which are essential for carrying on the work for practical educational purposes, as well as for provisioning the school. The Agricultural Department is, of necessity, expensive, at the same time, very essential to the maintenance of the school and the continued growth and expansion of the entire movement along the lines of social improvement.

During the summer, when the school is closed, Mr. Key not only superintends the farm work, but also the preserving and canning of a large quantity of fresh fruits and vegetables, putting up during the summer the entire supply needed for the school during the winter. In this task he is assisted by the women of the community, who have learned how to preserve fruits and vegetables for their own use, and who take the surplus product of the farm in return for their services. Furthermore, considerable quantities of potatoes and of canned goods are shipped each year to the school at Swansboro, N. C., thus helping to keep down the cost of maintenance for that school as well. As a result of this work the entire community is waking up to the possibilities of a better and more varied diet of articles produced upon the surrounding farms."

In November, 1913, a corn show was held in Wilmington. Mr. Key entered some Irish potatoes and peppers from the farm, and took a prize on each entry. Last year, 1914, a very fine exhibit was prepared, and, Mr. Key

being ill at the time, Mrs. Peterson took charge of it. Great interest was shown in the entire display. At the present time there is no fund with which to buy tools, to hire extra labor, to purchase seeds even, to say nothing of animals, or for the repair of buildings; so the work is seriously hampered often for want of the very essentials needed to carry it on. What Mr. Key has accomplished under great limitations is deserving of the very highest praise and appreciation from the entire denomination.

CORN SHUCKING, SHELTER NECK

SOCIAL WORK.

This is hard to describe in limited space because it covers so many activities. From Dix House and from the little bungalow at Swansboro there has gone forth a wave of inspiration which has helped both communities. Among the most important things have been the simple but excellent entertainments given by the workers in both places, assisted by the people themselves. The houses have been in the truest sense recreation centres for their community. Every Saturday night there is an entertainment of some kind at Dix

House. It may be music, tableaux, charades, a graphophone concert, or a talk by some visitor. Something is provided, and the people come long distances for the social time. Sunday evenings the house is also open, and all join in singing the fine old hymns of the church. Mrs. Peterson makes much of Christmas, and always gets up a most attractive entertainment. Then there are Farmers' Institutes, Corn Shows, and many things of local interest. The importance of clean recreation in our rural communities everywhere cannot be too highly estimated, and the value of these pleasant meetings is not

A COUNTRY ROAD, NORTH CAROLINA

to be calculated by dollars and cents. There are also good libraries, with several hundred volumes in each place, and they are being used more and more by the people.

Much is done also for the improvement of health and of sanitary conditions. Mr. Key is frequently called upon to render first aid—and second aid, too—in cases of sickness. He keeps on hand a supply of simple remedies, and the people come from all the region round about to get help, and to be cured of their diseases. Mrs. Peterson is constantly going about teaching better

living conditions, and training the young people in ways of carefulness and thrift.

There is constant emphasis on citizenship, real patriotism, civic pride, community spirit; and these things, combined with the generous, hearty, whole-souled interest in the community have exerted a most far-reaching influence for good. The people are learning that Christianity, as Unitarians interpret it, means service, not selfish salvation. Mr. Key and Mr. Robinson have both been active in the Good Roads movement, and, like Oberlin, have worked with the men in securing better and more permanent highways.

NEEDS.

What are the needs of this great work?

First, for the religious side, money for salaries, travelling expenses, and general maintenance. Men cannot be asked to enter this exacting field unless they can be assured of their living. This is why our Branches are urged to pledge a yearly sum that the committee may know on what to depend. About one hundred and fifty branches are now giving a definite amount annually to the support of this work. Why should not all assist?

Secondly, the educational department is in great need of funds for its running expenses, payment of teachers, purchase of school supplies, the repair of buildings, and for the farm. We ought to have here a model farm, cooperating with the state, and becoming an experiment station. The farm *now* is a most important asset for all this work. Even a little money would make it far more valuable. The work done here has already changed the character of the locality, and raised the value of real estate; but much more might be done with a few hundreds a year of assured income.

Then there are *scholarships*, of two classes: A *full* scholarship of fifty dollars a year, which provides for the board and tuition of a pupil whose home is at a distance, and who must therefore live at Dix House; and a *part* or home scholarship of ten dollars a year, to be used in payment of the tuition of those pupils who live at home. Already one permanent scholarship has been established which yields an income sufficient for a full scholarship. Many more are needed, however, and here is a splendid bit of missionary

work for our Sunday Schools, Young People's Unions, Social Service Committees, as well as for our churches and Alliance branches. Who will be the first to aid in the maintenance of this school?

Thirdly, the social needs are as numerous as the work is various. Money is necessary to keep on hand the simple remedies which are so frequently called for. A district nurse would be a boon to the whole region. Who will pay her salary, board, and travelling expenses, and provide her with the equipment she must have to do her work?

Finally, these hard-working ministers need a change now and then. There ought to be a fund to enable them to attend the meetings of the Southern Conference, even if it does take fifty dollars to pay each bill. They need the inspiration of the Conference, and the *Conference needs the inspiration of their presence.*

Shall we not *all* take hold of this work—*every* Alliance branch, *every* Sunday School, *every* Young People's Union, *every* church? Let us hearten those who are bearing the heat and burden of the day, by showing that we appreciate their sacrifices, that we admire their zeal, and that we feel that this great work, undertaken for the upbuilding of humanity, and carried forward so bravely and unselfishly, must be sustained. Every Unitarian ought to be interested in it, and ought to consider it a privilege to aid in its development There is a fine plant, a splendid foundation, enormous possibilities of usefulness, a reputation of noble service. The opportunity is ours to extend this work until it shall become a great institution, whose influence for good shall be transmitted from generation to generation, and many yet unborn shall rise up to call it blessed.

Will you not help?

Contributions may be sent to

MRS. LUCIA CLAPP NOYES, *Treasurer*,
11 St. John Street,
Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts.

Money for salaries of teachers should be sent to

~~Mr. Percy A. Atherton~~,
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